

FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS, ENGAGEMENT AND VOICE

Successful ways to invite families to share their stories and give voice to issues that help us understand the impact of policies and system level decision-making.

- Create more opportunities to ask open-ended questions to get more information than a survey.
- Increase opportunities for parents to be part of solutions and decision making.
- Develop a guiding question regarding families' needs.
 - What would make it safe for you to share stories so decision makers can hear directly?
 - How can we coordinate care and services to make a difference for your child?
 - Who are the "trusted messengers" for families and communities? Who are the natural points of contact in the community?
- Listen to children's voices and families directly. (Example: ESD 113's videos of high school students in Vancouver).
 - What are ways we can gather stories – audio or video or written stories? Rely on community partners to get those stories? How have other programs collected stories?

Considerations for engaging and partnering with families.

- Parents don't want to just tell the story. They want to be part of the decision making process and identifying solutions. ECEAP and Head Start policy councils are good examples where families are part of decision-making.
 - How do we ensure when families share stories, that they see an impact or change?
 - How do we make systemic changes and take care of families who are currently experiencing *barriers*?
 - How do we ensure families are part of identifying solutions and decision-making?
- Provide families with information. Find tools, suggestions and guidance to make it easier for parents to navigate the process of participating in decision-making
 - Can you be involved in.....?
 - Provide thoughts, tools, training and support in navigating participating and influencing.
- Is a DEL Parent Advisory Group the best way to get those stories and get their voice in decision making? Will hear a different story depending on who you are. Local level is the best avenue for listening to get a genuine understanding. That is where the level of trust is. Also, you will hear different stories depending on who is doing the asking. One coalition is hearing a lot of stories about the K-12 system and that is because the coalition is not the K-12 system. Communities need a trusted non-government agency to listen.
 - For example, hear from African Americans that do not trust Home Visiting. Black infant mental health programs need more messengers that are trusted.
- The conversations have to happen at the local level but how do you connect those conversations to the decision making at the state level? That is a problem for ELAC to solve. ELAC could become a repository that holds the information and supports a community of practice.
- Honor the stories and requests that families bring to the safe place.
- Heard from a family that usually agencies give families lots and lots of socks, but is needed are shoes to get families to where they want to go.